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# Hipponax and His Enemies in Ovid's Ibis

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## **Comments**

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HIPPONAX AND HIS ENEMIES IN OVID'S *IBIS*

Among the many textual difficulties that beset Ovid's *Ibis*<sup>1</sup> are two passages that allude, in an oblique fashion typical of the whole poem,<sup>2</sup> to the iambographer Hipponax:

(1) et quae Pytheides fecit de fratre Medusae,  
eveniant capiti vota sinistra tuo,  
(447–8 La Penna)

(2) utque parum stabili qui carmine laesit Athenin,  
invisus pereas deficiente cibo.  
(523–4 La Penna)

These passages occur in the long catalogue of curses called down by the poet upon his anonymous enemy, whom he refers to as *Ibis* in imitation of Callimachus' poem of the same name.<sup>3</sup> Ovid had already warned in the beginning of his poem that if his *devotio* against Ibis in elegiac couplets proved ineffective, he would have to abandon his Callimachean model in favour of the more deadly iambics of Archilochus.<sup>4</sup> The poet's wish in 447–8 that his enemy suffer the same tortures that Hipponax wished on his own enemy is a further reminder that his curse-poem had a long and variegated ancestry that went beyond even Callimachus.<sup>5</sup> The transmitted text of the two passages quoted above, however, has made it difficult to perceive any allusion to Hipponax whatsoever, and in fact anyone using Owen's currently printed Oxford edition of the poem would in each case be led down other paths of interpretation.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have puzzled over both passages and lavished considerable ingenuity on them since the sixteenth century. We need not rehearse all the details here, since they recently have been treated elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> In any case, I accept as authoritative the text of both passages offered in La Penna's edition, and I regard it as certain that Ovid's

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used: La Penna = A. La Penna, *Publi Ovidi Nasonis Ibis* (Florence, 1957); Degani = E. Degani, *Hipponactis Testimonia et Fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1983); Degani, *Studi* = E. Degani, *Studi su Ipponatte* (Bari, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Note Ovid's programme in v. 55: '...historiis involvam carmina caecis'.

<sup>3</sup> The scanty information we have about Callimachus' *Ibis* is collected in fr. 381–2 Pf.

<sup>4</sup> postmodo, se perges, in te mihi liber iambus  
tincta Lycambeo sanguine tela dabit.  
nunc, quo Battiades inimicum devovet Ibin,  
hoc ego devoceo teque tuosque modo.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the strictly literary sources, Ovid also seems to have been inspired by the formulaic imprecations of the *tabellae defixiones*, on which see C. Zipfel, *Quatenus Ovidius in Ibide Callimachum aliosque fontes imprimis defixiones secutus sit* (Diss. Leipzig, 1910) and La Penna pp. xx–xxxi.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. S. G. Owen, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Tristium libri quinque; Ibis; ex Ponto libri quattuor; Halieutica fragmenta* (Oxford, 1915). Owen prints at 445 (= 447 La Penna) 'et quae Pitthides fecit fraterque Medusae' and endorses the explanation of Salvagnius (Leiden, 1660) in his apparatus 'significatur Eurystheus, qui multa vota in Herculis exitium nuncupavit'. Housman calls this an 'impudent and comical fiction' (*JPh* 35 [1920], 299–300 = *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman* [Cambridge, 1972], iii.1027–8), though his own explanation – that the couplet refers to Theseus' imprecations on Hippolytus (as *frater patruelis* of Medusa) – works only if one accepts, with Salvagnius, *Pitthides*; cf. La Penna, pp. 113–14, and below, note 8, on the text of this line.

At 520 (= 523 La Penna) Owen prints, with many editors, *Athenas*. For attempts to explain this reading, cf. Degani, *Studi*, pp. 61–2.

<sup>7</sup> Degani, *Studi*, pp. 59–63. La Penna, p. 113, refers to 447–8 as 'forse il distico più spinoso dell' *Ibis*'.

allusions in each case are to Hipponax.<sup>8</sup> I should like rather to turn my attention to the curious epithet in the second half of 447, *de fratre Medusae*, and argue that Ovid here refers not, as is usually supposed, to Hipponax's famous enemy Bupalus, but to his brother Athenis, the same one who appears later in 523. Such an identification, I believe, not only enriches our understanding of Ovid's allusive technique in the *Ibis*, but also offers a modest, but very welcome, testimonium about the content of Hipponax's lost poems.

La Penna supposes that *de fratre Medusae* refers to Bupalus, and Degani, with some hesitation, entertains the suggestion.<sup>9</sup> Once we accept, after all, that the patronymic in 447, *Pytheides*, refers to Hipponax, it is only natural that we think immediately of his famous poetic target, Bupalus, as the recipient of his *vota sinistra*.<sup>10</sup> Degani's diffidence about the identification, however, is understandable, since it is by no means immediately apparent in what sense Bupalus could be considered the 'brother of Medusa'.<sup>11</sup> Degani ingeniously suggests that since Bupalus was a sculptor, Ovid may have intended a connection between the 'petrification' that Bupalus achieved every time he made a sculpture, and the 'petrifying' effects the mythical Medusa had on all who looked at her.<sup>12</sup> Degani also notes that fr. 126 (= 128 W) may be relevant, where Hipponax ridicules a glutton called *Εὐρυμέδων*, i.e. the 'son of *Εὐρυμέδων*'. Scholars have often seen Bupalus behind this epithet, though, as Degani is fully aware, the arguments for such an identification

<sup>8</sup> A brief summary of the cruces, however, is perhaps useful at this point. In passage (1) the MSS. offer, among others, variants such as *penthides*, *pentides*, *pentelides*, *pithoides*; in the second hemistich we find a vacillation between *fraterque* and *de fratre*. In passage (2) the MSS. offer *Athenas*. For the many, often ingenious, attempts to make sense of the received texts, see La Penna, pp. 113–15 (passage 1), 138–9 (passage 2) and Degani, pp. 59–63. La Penna's emendation *Pytheides* in the first instance, suggested early on by J. Micyllus in his edition of 1550, and later approved by Sanctius (1598) and A. Rostagni, *Ibis. Storia di un poemetto greco* (Florence, 1920), is based on the fact that all the ancient scholia explained the passage as an allusion to Hipponax. The scholia themselves were confused by the patronymic, and offered a variety of wild anecdotes; cf. La Penna, *Scholia in P. Ovidi Nasonis Ibin* (Florence, 1959), pp. 116–17; Degani, *Studi*, p. 107 n. 175; and M. Davies, 'Archilochus and Hipponax in a Scholium on Ovid's *Ibis*', *Prometheus* 7 (1981), 123–4. The *Suda* (ι 588 Adl.), however, refers to Hipponax as *υἱὸς Πύθεω*, and it is probable that the wild scholiastic anecdotes result from an ancient marginal note, 'Hipponax', which successive scholiasts freely elaborated upon; cf. La Penna, p. 114. In the case of passage (2), it is surprising that the emendation *Athenin*, which goes back to sixteenth-century critics (cf. Degani, *Studi*, p. 108 n. 181), has, until La Penna, found endorsement only in Rostagni. The expression *parum stabili... carmine*, following immediately after a couplet about Archilochus, *qua* inventor of the iambus (*utque repertori nocuit pugnacis iambi*, 521), undoubtedly refers to Hipponax *qua* inventor of the choliambus (cf. La Penna, p. 138; Degani, *Studi*, p. 62). Athenis, on whom see below pp. 293–4, was the brother of Hipponax's well-known target Bupalus. <sup>9</sup> La Penna, p. 114; Degani, *Studi*, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> For fragments attacking Bupalus by name, cf. fr. 17 Dg (= 1 W), 18 Dg (= 15 W), 19 Dg (= 95aW), 20 Dg (= 12 W), 86.18 Dg (= 84 W).

<sup>11</sup> Some of the MSS. have *fraterque Medusae*, on which see La Penna's remarks, p. 114. The scholiasts, it is true, all seem to have used a text with this reading, since they call *Hipponax* the 'brother of Medusa' (cf. Hipponax Testim. 10–12aDg), but they offer no opinion as to why Hipponax may have been called that, and they otherwise contain such bizarre fictions that one wonders how attentive they were to Ovid's actual text. Degani, *Studi*, p. 61, suggests that if we retain *fraterque Medusae* (though he thinks it the less probable reading), we might explain it as an allusion 'alla terribile Musa ipponattea o alla presunta, ampiamente attestata *foeditas* fisica del poeta'.

<sup>12</sup> Degani, *Studi*, p. 61; he also calls attention to *Ibis* 553; *saxificae... Medusae*. Cf. fr. 144 Dg (= 136 W): *ἀνδριάντα· τὸν λίθινον ἔφη Ἰππῶναξ Βούπαλον <τὸν> ἀγαλματοποιόν*. (This fragment probably means 'Hipponax called Bupalus the sculptor a "stony statue"', though the exact sense is disputed; see Degani's notes *ad loc.* p. 148.)

are, at best, quite speculative.<sup>13</sup> Degani notes further that the epithet *Εὐρυμέδων* was at times attached to gods or demi-gods who had had some interaction with the Gorgon Medusa.<sup>14</sup> But even though a connection between Ovid's 'brother of Medusa' and *Εὐρυμεδοντιάδης* does seem likely, since the identity of *Εὐρυμεδοντιάδης* himself is still uncertain we must admit that the strongest argument for identifying 'the brother of Medusa' as Bupalus remains the simple fact that *Ibis* 447–8 must refer to one of Hipponax's targets, and the target most emblematic of the Hipponactean iambus is Bupalus.

Neither La Penna nor Degani, however, addresses another oddity in the phrase *de fratre Medusae* that requires explanation, namely the force of *frater*. Presumably those who argue that 'brother of Medusa' refers to Bupalus take the expression figuratively and loosely, an insult where *frater* merely implies that Bupalus is cut from the same cloth as Medusa and could be considered her brother. There are several considerations, however, which strongly suggest that we understand *frater* quite literally as 'brother', *Medusa* alone as referring to Bupalus, and the whole phrase, therefore, as referring to Bupalus' brother Athenis. We have already established that in identifying *Pytheides* as Hipponax, the rest of the couplet must refer to imprecations on one of his enemies. The assumption that the 'brother of Medusa' must be Bupalus, as we noted, is a natural one in view of his enduring fame as Hipponax's *bête-noire*. But we must here invoke the testimony about Bupalus' brother Athenis, also a sculptor, who was likewise attacked by Hipponax in his poetry. Pliny mentions the two in *NH* 36.11, '... Archermus, cuius filii Bupalus et Athenis vel clarissimi in ea scientia fuere Hipponactis poetae aetate, quem certum est LX Olympiade fuisse', and continues in the passage to relate the story of the quarrel between the brothers and the poet.<sup>15</sup> The Suda (ι 588 Adl.) also states that Hipponax

<sup>13</sup> See Degani p. 128 for full bibliography. O. Masson set out the arguments in 'Sur un papyrus contenant des fragments d'Hipponax', *REG* 62 (1949), 314–15 as follows: fr. 126 Dg (= 128 W) is a clear homeric parody, and we are thus easily directed to *Odyssey* 7.54–9, where the Phaeacian queen Arete is said to have sprung from the king of the Giants, Eurymedon; Arete is the name given by Hipponax to the woman whom he and Bupalus pursue as rival lovers; therefore, calling Bupalus also a descendant of Eurymedon (*Εὐρυμεδοντιάδης*) implies that he is related to Arete, and as such commits incest in his pursuit of her. Masson suggested further that Arete was Bupalus' mother, on the ground that Hipponax calls Bupalus a *μητροκοίτης* at fr. 20.2 Dg (= 12 W; cf. also fr. 69.7 Dg [= 70 W]). Others have accepted this, though he himself has since withdrawn the idea in *Les fragments du poète Hipponax* (Paris, 1962), p. 169 n. 2. L. Koenen, in 'ΘΕΟΙΣΙΝ ΕΧΘΡΟΣ: Ein einheimischer Gegenkönig in Ägypten', *CE* 34 (1959), 112–13 argues that Bupalus and Arete are related as brother and sister in Hipponax, just as Alcinoos and Arete were in the *Odyssey* passage. If one accepts this formulation, one could perhaps argue that Ovid's *fratre Medusae* refers to Bupalus in his capacity as brother of Arete, where *Medusae* refers to Arete, though it seems unlikely that Hipponax would call the woman whom he pursues erotically a 'Medusa'!

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Perseus in Ap. Rh. 4.1512; Poseidon (a lover of Medusa in Hesiod, *Th.* 276–9) called *Εὐρυμέδων* in Pind. *Ol.* 8.31; Degani, *Studi*, p. 107 n. 177. Degani also records O. Gruppe's claim in *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich, 1906), p. 1141 [wrongly cited in Degani], that the name 'Medusa' may have arisen as a shortened form of *Εὐρυμέδουσα* (i.e. a feminine form of *Εὐρυμέδων*, given to her in her capacity as a lover of Poseidon), though cf. K. Ziegler s.v. 'Gorgo' in *RE* VII.2 (1912), col. 1632.

<sup>15</sup> According to Pliny's version, both Bupalus and Athenis were involved in making a satirical portrait of Hipponax (cf. also the Suda's testimony, above). Others mention only Bupalus as the culpable party (cf. Degani Testim. 9a, 9b = Σ ad Hor. *Epod.* 6.14). (J. André, *Ovide contre Ibis* [Paris, 1963], p. 51 reasons incorrectly when he states that Pliny 'refutes the legend' and then uses this to argue against reading *Athenin*. Pliny repudiates only the part of the 'legend' that has Hipponax's poems drive the brothers to their death, not the notion that they were attacked by the poet at all.)

composed poetry against the two brothers: γράφει δὲ πρὸς Βούπαλον καὶ Ἀθηνῆν ἀγαλματοποιούς, ὅτι αὐτοῦ εἰκόνας πρὸς ὕβριν εἰργάσαντο. That Athenis was a *dramatis persona* of some sort in Hipponax's poetry has been confirmed by fr. 70.1 Dg (= 70.11 W), Ὡθηνι κυί, a line which, to judge from the papyrological signs, opens the poem.<sup>16</sup> In short, while it is probably the case that Hipponax directed most of his poetic attacks against Bupalus and thereby assured Bupalus the most recognition in posterity, there is good reason for us to think that a complete corpus of Hipponax would reveal a significant number of poems against Athenis as well. It seems reasonable to say, therefore, that Ovid's reference to a *frater* in a line involving a target of Hipponax would most naturally evoke one of the brother-sculptors whom he attacked with his iambs. Moreover, it would be perfectly consonant with Ovid's self-conscious avoidance of obvious or common versions of stories and myths in the *Ibis* for him to identify Hipponax not as the poet who attacked Bupalus, but as the one who attacked the *brother* of Bupalus.

Even with this explanation, there still remains the question of the force of *Medusa*. Here we must modify the remarks of La Penna and Degani, and understand *Medusa* by itself as referring to Bupalus. Degani's suggestion that Bupalus was 'Medusa-like' insofar as he turned people to stone with his sculpture would be quite intelligible to anyone familiar with the Hipponactean corpus, while it is enough of a γρίφος to give a reader pause.<sup>17</sup> It even remains possible that somewhere in his poetry Hipponax portrayed the brothers Bupalus and Athenis as twin Gorgons, an insult that we find attested in Aristophanes, *Pax* 807–11, used of the tragic poets Morsimus and his brother Melanthius:

ἥνίκα τῶν τραγωδῶν  
τὸν χορὸν εἶχον ἀδελ-  
φός τε καὶ αὐτός  
ἄμφω Γοργόνες ὀφιοφάγοι, βατιδοσκόποι Ἀρπυιαί,  
γρασοσβαί μιαιοί, τραγομάσχαλοι ἰχθυολύμαι.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to think that Ovid intended *frater* to refer to Athenis rather than Bupalus is the fact that when he refers to Hipponax seventy-six lines later (v. 523), he identifies the iambographer as the one who attacked Athenis ('utque parum stabili qui carmine *laesit Athenin*'). The decision to use Athenis rather than Bupalus to conjure up Hipponax's invective can only be regarded as a choice of the more recondite alternative. The deliberate avoidance of an allusion to Bupalus implies that such an allusion would be too obvious for the Callimachean technique

<sup>16</sup> T. Bergk in his *Poetae Lyrici Graeci* (Leipzig, 1843), p. 513, had suggested <τε> κάθηνις for κατέκτεινεν in fr. 17 Dg (= 1 W: ὦ Κλαζομένιοι, Βούπαλος κατέκτεινεν), based on κάθηνις in MS. B of Iuba Artigr. ap. Mar. Plot. Sac. *Ars Gramm.* 3.4 [= GL 6.522.15–20 Keil], from which fr. 17 derives. Many scholars have accepted this (cf. Degani, p. 37), though Degani endorses West's repudiation of the reading on stemmatic grounds (M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* [Berlin/New York, 1974], p. 140).

<sup>17</sup> It is true that, insofar as both brothers were sculptors, 'Medusa' could by itself refer to either brother; hence we cannot deny the possibility that 'de fratre Medusae' might refer to Bupalus *qua* 'brother of Athenis'. But since there is little doubt, to judge from the testimonia and extant fragments, that Bupalus rather than Athenis was considered in antiquity to be Hipponax's primary target, it seems more likely that one would refer to 'Bupalus and his brother Athenis' (i.e. "'Medusa'" and the "brother of Medusa") than vice versa. For the arguments for connecting 'Medusa' with Bupalus that are based on the fragments, cf. above pp. 292–3. In the end, of course, we can only speculate that Hipponax himself actually called Bupalus 'Medusa'. It remains possible that Ovid invented the appellation, though his practice in the rest of *Ibis* seems to be to use attested, if obscure, circumlocutions, rather than to invent his own.

which is on display in the poem. Although this does not in itself prove that *de fratre Medusae* in 447 also cannot refer to Bupalus, Ovid's familiarity with and apparent interest in the role of Athenis in Hipponax's poetry, attested by 523, makes it likely that the *frater* of 447 was, like Athenis in 523, an alternative to an expected reference to Bupalus. It would not, in fact, be surprising if the reference to Athenis in the second hemistich of 523 were meant specifically as a gloss on, or at least a clue to, the enigma of, *de fratre Medusae* in the second hemistich of 447: the expression 'qui ... laesit Athenin' in 523 can be read, then, as a general, summary description of 448, 'eveniant capiti vota sinistra tuo', which refers to a specific poem in which Athenis was the *laesus*.

It is unfortunate that Ovid does not elaborate upon the *vota sinistra* in 448, since some indication as to their content would add to our impoverished knowledge of Hipponactean invective. Still, the line does offer some idea about the form of this particular attack in its original *sedes*. Hipponax, like Archilochus, could attack his targets in a variety of ways; he could use direct taunts and provocation (e.g. fr. 121 Dg [= 120 W], 122 Dg [= 121 W], 129 Dg [= 118 W]), he could be evasive or oblique (e.g. fr. 53 Dg [= 48 W], 126 Dg [= 128 W]), he could set his target in a demeaning role within an elaborate narrative (e.g. fr. 77.4 Dg/W [?], 79 Dg/W, 86 Dg [= 84 W]), or he could employ a formalized curse (e.g. fr. 133 Dg [= 114a W], 194 Dg [= 115 W]<sup>18</sup>). It is this last mode of attack – the formalized curse – that Ovid clearly has in mind in 448. If we are correct to argue that Ovid's reference to a 'brother of Medusa' is actually to Athenis, we may say with some certainty that Hipponax somewhere attacked him in a poem that included such a formalized enumeration of curses, much as Ovid attacked his enemy in the last 400 lines of the *Ibis*.

### Excursus

It seems strange that while Ovid had early in the poem cast himself in the aggressive role of Archilochus and Hipponax, and wished upon his enemy imprecations worthy of these models, now in 521–4 he wants his enemy to die the miserable deaths that these iambographers themselves allegedly suffered:

utque repertori nocuit pugnacis iambi  
 sic sit in exitium lingua proterva tuum.  
 utque parum stabili qui carmine laesit Athenin,  
 invisus pareas deficiente cibo.

(521–4 La Penna)

In other words, the roles are now momentarily reversed. Ovid's enemy is characterized as an iambographer, while the poet himself becomes his enemy's target; such, at least, is the implication of Ovid's wish that his enemy's *proterva lingua* be the death of him. It is difficult to say what motivated Ovid to include two couplets that seem to undercut the invective role he had assumed programmatically in the poem from the start. There can be little doubt, of course, that he wanted to demonstrate his familiarity with offbeat traditions of poets' deaths,<sup>19</sup> but the choice of Archilochus

<sup>18</sup> I accept Hipponactean authorship for fr. 194 Dg (= 115 W), though the controversy remains unsettled; cf. Degani *ad loc.*, p. 168 for full bibliography.

<sup>19</sup> On Ovid's fascination here with such traditions, see La Penna, pp. lxvii–lxxi. Note that the allusion in the couplet immediately following, 'utque lyrae vates fertur periisse severae, / causa sit exitii dextera laesa tui' (525–6), still defies certain identification; cf. La Penna, p. 139.



and Hipponax surely must also be intended to recall their appearance earlier in the poem. As such, these couplets do more than simply enumerate yet another horrible misfortune for the poet's enemy; they underscore in a clever, almost self-mocking way that the enemy, like the poet, had also been engaging in invective, and that, depending on one's vantage point, either party could be cast in the role of iambographer.<sup>20</sup> It is a great irony that Ovid can view his own models of poetic success as models of self-destruction, and the irony is enhanced when we understand the 'brother of Medusa' in 447 to refer to Athenis, since that expression highlights more precisely both the connection to, and contrast with, the later reference to Hipponax in 523.

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<sup>20</sup> Verbal attacks by the poet's enemy are implied in 13–14: 'vulneraque inimitis requiem quaerentia vexat,/ iactat et in tota nomina nostra foro'. It seems likely, moreover, that Ovid's curse at 524, 'invisus pereas deficiente cibo', refers specifically to a similar curse that 'Ibis' had levelled against him, cf. 21–2: 'nititur ut profugae desint alimenta senectae:/ heu quanto est nostris dignior ipse malis!'.

I owe thanks to my colleague Joseph Farrell for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.